

Bibliodiversity

*The newsletter of the Alliance of Independent Publishers
December 2006 – n° 7 - ISSN 1778-4018*

Editorial

We got some very bad news from Burkina Faso in the month of December: Joseph Ki Zerbo (photo below), an eminent African historian, political activist, promoter of independence movements, and reputable author, passed away. Upon hearing the news, Marie-Agathe Amoikon Fauquembergue of Eburnie publications (Ivory Coast) responded: “A baobab has left us!”.

We would like to salute the man, author, and thinker Ki Zerbo was. We remember the international co-publication of his last work, which he entrusted to Alliance members: “A quand l’Afrique?” (“When’s the time for Africa?”) has become a reference, the winner of the “World Citizen award” (prix RFI Citoyen du Monde), a commercial success, and is now translated into Portuguese by 4 members of our network. We would like to send our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

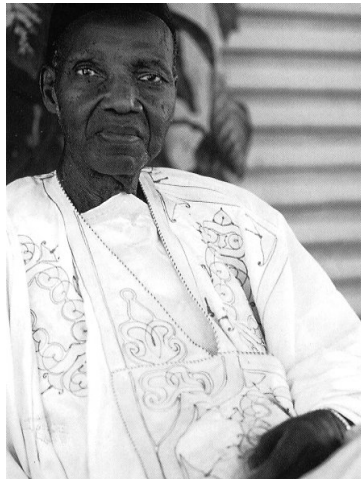
The month of December was also, for the Alliance team, a month of publication. You will find under “New Releases” descriptions of two works published under the series État des lieux de l’édition (State of Affairs in Publishing) – published by the Alliance itself – a rare exception. We stress the importance of both works in this section - and you’ll excuse us the boasting – for capitalizing on and distributing to the largest audience possible the knowledge and experiences gained in the field.

We also point you to the “Events” section for discussion of the objectives of our meeting of Allies, which is expected to be held in Paris from July 1 to 4, 2007 (save the date!). We have ambitious objectives that are essential to the orientation of both our actions and means for the next three years.

Finally, we put the spotlight this month on Béatrice Lalinon Gbado for her professionalism and creativity, and the success of her publishing house Streams from Africa (“Ruisseaux d’Afrique”), under the “Portrait” section. Who would dare say that African publishing is nonexistent, as we hear from time to time?

Lastly, both the Alliance team and its executive board wish you an excellent New Year.

Etienne Galliard



New Releases

Independent publishers on the attack?

The Alliance of Independent Publishers has taken on the task, among others, of putting together a body of texts focusing reflection on the notion of independence in publishing. We have now

taken a decisive step in this domain with the publication of a book by Gilles Collet, associate professor in the Publishing and Books (“Métiers du livre”) department of IUT in Aix-en-Provence and co-director of the publishing house Vents d’ailleurs.

What is an independent publisher? What is a “creative publisher”? Can a large group be an independent publisher? How can a publisher, in the context of concentration and financial constraints, stay independent in daily life, while maintaining its activist role?

Such are the questions that Gilles Colleu confronts in his work *Independent Publishers: moving from the age of reason on to the attack?* (“*Éditeurs indépendants: de l’âge de raison vers l’offensive?*”) Far from any caricature, Gilles uses sound and engaging reasoning based on a “certain idea” of publishing to show us some characteristics that make the creative independent publisher a major actor, and a natural defender, of book diversity.

The Alliance, along with Gilles, aimed to give the reader a definition of the independent creative publisher, as we feel it is necessary to try to clarify this complex yet essential notion: independence.

You will thus find in this work an outline – in the form of a series of questions – which allows us to estimate the degree of independence and creative action of a publisher. We have taken up the main points here, for discussion, so you can contribute.

It’s not a matter of simply listing who is independent and who’s not. It’s a question of estimating the level of independence, the aspects on which the publisher is strongly independent and those upon which it is not. The innovating nature of this “testing” tool will speak to the reader, in a context where more and more, book professionals are being labeled in one way or another.

HOW CAPITAL IS STRUCTURED: who owns the company, how does it function, and on what production cycle?

Do the publishers themselves – those who define the editorial strategy and catalog and

who work concretely with the selection of works - handle the company’s capital?

Are financial shareholders (banks, pension funds, insurance groups...organizations that focus on short-term profitability) part of the capital structure of the publishing house?



Do one or several professional actors (a printer or distributor, for example) hold a share in the capital structure? Does the capital structure rely on associate partners, political parties, social movements, religious structures?

Is the editorial structure truly committed to a long production cycle, without focusing solely on short-term profitability?

THE CONTENTS OF THE CATALOG: what kind of intellectual or cultural undertaking does it represent?

Is it a question of publishing books above all according to quality standards, and do these standards come before objectives based on pure profitability?

Are the financial means serving a cultural objective?

Does the publisher use administrative and managerial methods that limit overproduction, in a way that is respectful of partners, distributors, workers, and interns?

Does the publisher try to establish a commercial and financial balance between new releases and existing works?

Is the publisher committed to finding new authors, producing unique books, even if it involves taking financial risks? The catalog of an independent creative publisher is not only based on a logic of responding to demand, but also on an offer-based logic.

Is the independent creative publisher committed to limiting, as much as possible, production – often disguised by co-publication – that is directly demanded by public or private institutions?

Does the publisher practice solidarity in the entire book chain, particularly concerning independent book stores, and, at an international level, with partners from other countries by putting into place solidarity-based co-publications, and more generally, fair commercial agreements?

Does the publisher practice solidarity amongst its different titles, following a system of distribution of revenues such that a commercial success could provide funding to reinvest in other titles?

Does the publisher participate in spreading ideas and fueling public debate by structuring its catalog in a certain way, by establishing a particular editorial strategy? This debate and contribution can be made by publishing works in any field, including human and social sciences, literature, children's books, etc.

DISTRIBUTION AND MARKETING:
how does the publisher enter into contact with the reader?

Does the publisher preferably, and as often as possible, work with independent bookstores?

Does the publisher try to have a say in the way its works are distributed?

Are the publisher's works distributed by structures that impose certain practices on independent bookstores?

Does the publisher prioritize partnerships with publishers from other countries, rather than merely exporting its books?

ETHICS AND COMMITMENT: is the publisher's behavior in its professional environment respectful, responsible, and solidarity-based?

Does the creative independent publisher work independently, without holding more than a third of the capital of another publishing house?

Does the publisher apply and defend the law that sets a fixed price on books? Or is it actively working towards getting a similar law passed in the countries where such a law does not yet exist?

Does the publisher respect legislation regarding copyrights, translators, and interns?

Is the publisher committed to environmentally-friendly actions (particularly regarding recycled paper and the fight against overproduction and waste)?

Independent Publishers: moving from the age of reason on to the attack? ("Éditeurs indépendants : de l'âge de raison vers l'offensive?")
Alliance of Independent Publishers
Series *État des lieux de l'édition* ("State of Affairs in Publishing")
160 pages, 10 euros in France
ISBN 978-2-9519747-2-2

Words and acts defending bibliodiversity

A collective work, with texts from Anne-Marie Métaillé, éditions Métaillé (France); Bernard Stéphan, l'Atelier (France); Beatriz de Moura, Tusquets (Spain); Paulo Slachevsky, Lom (Chile); Jorge Herralde, Anagrama (Spain); Anne Lima, Chandeigne (France); Jacques Dos Santos, Chá de Caxinde (Angola); Víctor Manuel Mendiola, El Tucán de Virgina (Mexico); José María Espinasa, Sin Nombre (Mexico); Horia Barna, Humanitas (Romania); Serge D. Kouam, Presses Universitaires d'Afrique (Cameroon); Alejandro Zenker, El Ermitaño (Mexico); Jean Richard, en bas (Switzerland); Gaston Bellemare, Écrits des Forges (Canada-Quebec); Gilles Colleu, Vents d'ailleurs (France); Françoise Nyssen et Elisabeth Beyer, Actes Sud (France); Pablo Harari, Trilce (Uruguay); Gilles Pellerin, L'instant même (Quebec-Canada); Daniela Di Sora, Voland (Italy); Sandro Cohen, Colibrí (Mexico); Cristina Warth, Pallas (Brazil); Ginevra Bompiani, Nottetempo (Italy); Federico Ibáñez, Castalia (Spain).

Just one year after the meeting at Guadalajara (Mexico), the Alliance published, in partnership with the Latin Union, a work focusing on the excellent contributions presented by participants during the meeting.

In this work, 23 independent publishers speak about the cultural specificity of this necessary, enthralling, and essential career that they have been practicing despite often difficult economic conditions.

These publishers put forth, above all, concrete proposals for ways to defend book diversity. Their thoughts and interventions have been outlined in this work, and we invite you to enter the daily life of a complex profession.

Des paroles et des actes pour la bibliodiversité
(“Words and Acts Defending Book Diversity”)

Alliance of Independent Publishers

Collection « État des lieux de l'édition »
(Series « The state of affairs in publishing »)

288 pages, 10 euros in France

ISBN 978-2-9519747-3-9

Events

The 2007 Meeting of Allies: objectives

As you know, the Alliance of Independent Publishers has planned for 2007 a **general assembly of independent publishers**, that will be held in Paris, most likely during the first week of July (from the 1st to the 4th). We hope you will attend: your attendance is essential to the success of the event. These “international assizes in independent publishing” are meant to convene nearly 100 publishers and book professionals.

Several objectives have already been established – they will be completed by your observations and suggestions.

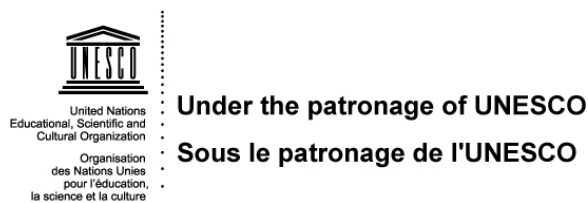
By meeting within linguistic groups, publishers will first have the opportunity to **draw up an outline assessing past activities as well as reflecting on future possibilities for solidarity-based co-publications**. These meetings will bring together publishers from many different countries, and result in projects for publication that prioritize the accessibility of texts.

The meeting will also provide the opportunity to engage in an in-depth discussion on the **objectives and internal**



governance of the Alliance of Independent Publishers and to come up with direction for the Alliance movement for the three years to come.

Finally, we would like to work on **concrete recommendations to promote book diversity**, in line with the Convention for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions, signed at the end of 2005 by nearly all members of UNESCO. These recommendations, once adopted by Alliance members, will be distributed amongst international organizations, States, and book professionals. This work is of particular importance in the context of the ratification of the Convention by signing States, so that book professionals clearly indicate what concrete measures should be taken in order to favor book diversity.



This meeting has already received support from UNESCO, granted by the director himself. UNESCO thus recognizes the potential of this event on both an international and intercultural level, as well as for its potential at developing proposals.

We are happy to invite you to participate in this grand event which is essential to the future of our adventure.

Portrait

Some streams turn into great rivers

Wherever she goes, one remembers her sociability, gentleness, and professionalism. One also remembers, anecdotally, her beautiful attire which



receives compliments wherever she is, North or South.

Beatrice Lalinon Gbado sometimes recalls that the first books she read spoke of snow and strawberries – both strange considering the surroundings in Benin – and that there were no works for children that spoke about Africa, written by African writers. Beatrice stepped up to the challenge, both as author and publisher. She created in 1998 les éditions Ruisseaux d’Afrique (“Streams of Africa”), a publishing house which gained international reputation in just a few years.

A science teacher at the time, Beatrice got involved in writing and conceptualizing children’s books. She quickly decided to establish her own publishing house, convinced that “African publishing holds a large part of the responsibility for children’s education.”¹ Today, her publications catalog is rich and coherent, her commercial endeavors are successful, her works are of extremely high quality. For example, her last two releases, *La Longue histoire du pagne* (“The story of the loincloth”) and *Les Messages du pagne* (“Messages from the Loincloth”), or the classic *Maman* (“Mommy”), illustrated by Senegalese stained glass pictures. The author of this newsletter – a great admirer of her publications – admits a certain attachment to her series *La Libellule* (“The Dragonfly”), energetic and fun for all generations!

Beatrice also established and ran the organization *Afrilivres* (“Afrobooks”) for 3 years. The organization is based in Cotonou. African solidarity is clearly dear to her. She also organizes workshops for illustrators, thus participating doubly in the effort to find emerging talents in sub-Saharan Africa.

Her publishing house, *les éditions Ruisseaux d’Afrique*, has participated in several co-publishing projects with the Alliance, including the series *Enjeux Planète* (“Global

¹ « *L'édition africaine [porte] en elle une grande partie de la responsabilité éducative des enfants* »

Issues”), *A quand l’Afrique?* (“When is the time for Africa?”), *L’Ombre d’Imana* (“The shadow of Imana”), etc.

We sincerely hope, both for the publishing house and for its creator, that much water continues to flow under its African bridges, to feed all the small streams that form the great rivers and oceans of the world.



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A **non-profit association**. **Tax situation** inspected by the tax authorities of East Paris (France). **2004 accounts certified** by an independent auditor - Cabinet SOFIDEEC, Paris (France). **2005 accounts** are in the process of certification by an independent auditor - Cabinet SOFIDEEC, Paris (France). The use of data collected by the Alliance **complies with the French data protection act** (declared to the French data protection authority, the Commission nationale de l’informatique et des libertés). **Cost accounting** on class 6 and 7 accounts (revenue - expenditure) is carried out to ensure effective monitoring of fund allocation. **The annual reports** (corporate and financial) of the Alliance, validated by the Annual General Meeting, are available on request from the permanent team. The documents published by the Alliance for circulation are printed **on recycled paper**. **Consumables** used by the Alliance are usually of organic farming and fair trade origin.

The Alliance would like to thank its partner organizations and institutions: see <http://www.alliance-editeurs.org/fr/partenaires.htm>

The newsletter of the Alliance of Independent Publishers is produced by the permanent team. The following participated in producing this issue: Alexandre Tiphagne (atiphagne@alliance-editeurs.org) and Etienne Galliand (egalliand@alliance-editeurs.org). This issue was translated into English by Reagan Kuhn, and into Spanish by Thomas Mouriès.